DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 847 CS 208 665

AUTHOR Olien, C. N.; And Others
TITLE Media and Stages of Social Conflict. Journalism Monographs Number Ninety.
INSTITUTION Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
PUB DATE Nov 84
NOTE 39p.
AVAILABLE FROM Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, College of Journalism, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208 ($5.00, single issue).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Activism; Audience Analysis; *Conflict Resolution; Content Analysis; Journalism; Knowledge Level; Mass Media Effects; *Media Research; *Newspapers; Power Structure; *Social Action; Social Differences; *Television Viewing; *Utilities
IDENTIFIERS *Media Role; Media Use

ABSTRACT

Noting that specific audience reaction to the media coverage of the various stages of an organized protest is seldom documented, this monograph analyzes the consequences of extensive media coverage during the crucial stages of a social protest against the construction of a high voltage powerline. In particular, the monograph considers two hypotheses: (1) as a conflict evolves from early to later stages, audience sources of information become more diversified, leading to changes in the relative use of newspapers, television, and personal sources by the audience, with television becoming more frequently used; and (2) as a conflict moves from coverage primarily by local and regional newspapers to coverage by metropolitan newspapers and television, the relationship between audience knowledge and use of newspapers will decline and the relationship between knowledge and use of television as a source will increase. The monograph discusses the evidence that supports the first hypothesis, describes how the second hypothesis receives partial support from the evidence, and concludes that the relationship between conflict intensity and communication flow is conditioned by the current phase of the controversy. (HOD)

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ED252847

JM journalism monographs

NUMBER NINTY

November 1984

C. N. OLIEN, G. A. DONOHUE
and P. T. TICHENOR

Media and Stages of Social Conflict

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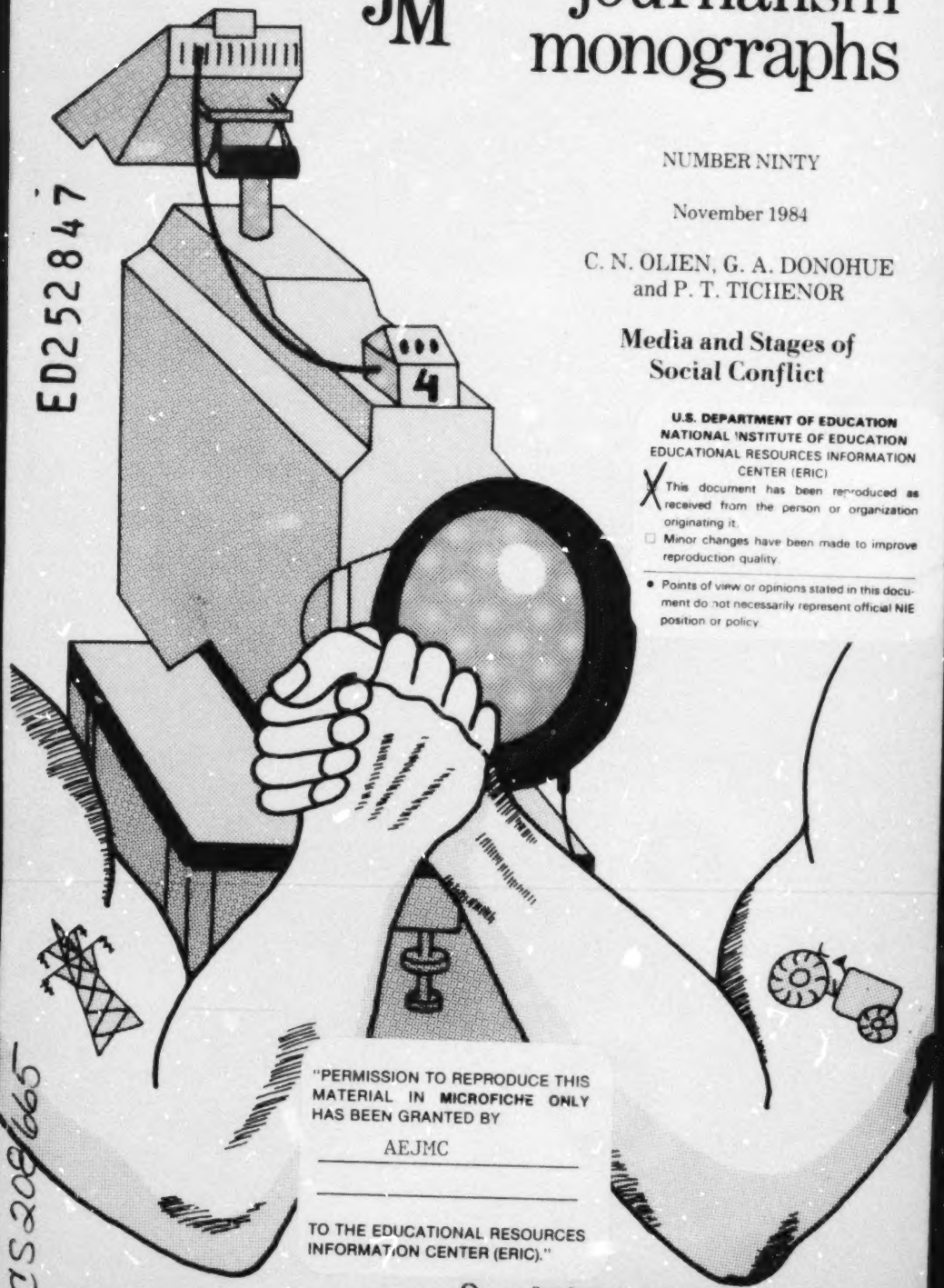

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JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS was supported for its first two years by a gift from the University of Texas, and until 1979 by the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.

Most editions of JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS are still in print and may be ordered from the Association. Microform and photocopies are also available through University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Please indicate series number, author and title when ordering single copies.

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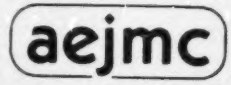

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POSTMASTER: Send address correction form to AEJMC, University of South Carolina, College of Journalism, Columbia, SC 29208.

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JM journalism monographs

NUMBER NINETY • November 1984

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C.N. OLIEN, G.A. DONOHUE
and P.J. TICHENOR

Media and Stages of Social Conflict

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Accepted for Publication September 1984

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SOCIAL PROTEST is not an aberration, but a time-honored part of the resolution of social problems in cases where the interests of various groups conflict with each other or with those of the larger society. Organized protests frequently have arisen where more conventional forms of negotiation and compromise are not readily available. Farm organization strikes and protests of the 1930-40 depression era, National Farmers Organization demonstrations of the 1960s, the labor movement, and recent protests against use of nuclear weapons are examples of different groups utilizing organized social protest as a technique for problem definition and possible resolution.

One of the primary goals of such protest movements is to gain the attention of the wider public. In seeking this attention, protest organizations may be expected, at some point, to utilize the mass media of newspapers and television. Coverage of protest movements by the media, at different stages, may be vital to the level of public awareness and possible success or failure of a movement. This role of the media in protests has been recognized historically in such diverse confrontations as the French Revolution;[1] the rural populist organizations of the 19th century;[2] and a number of other twentieth century rural protests, such as the Farmer's Holiday Movement of the 1930s.[3] Many protest groups established their own media, such as the *Leader*, a daily newspaper published by the Nonpartisan League in the 1915-22 period in North Dakota and Minnesota and judged to be a highly effective propaganda weapon for a movement that at one point grasped control of a state

legislature and established a state bank and a state-owned food-processing plant in North Dakota.[4] More generally, it has long been recognized that active reporting of social issues, including the "muckraking" of the turn of the century, may be instrumental in the public's value judgments about the issues at the center of social grievances.[5]

While the importance of the mass media in organized protests is often assumed, specific audience reaction to such media coverage throughout a protest period with shifting stages is rarely documented. This monograph presents an analysis of the consequences of extensive media coverage during the crucial stages of a social protest against a high voltage powerline for audience response to that coverage and to the movement itself. The study is based on a longitudinal comparison of these audience responses in two different community structures — a small-town rural area and a suburban fringe community area — where the powerline was being constructed. These responses occur during a period when the media event strategies changed from one phase to another, with the coverage limited initially to small town and regional newspapers and shifting to domination by metropolitan dailies and television.[6]

A few recent studies indicate the role of mass media in drawing attention to citizen action particularly in the environmental movement,[7] in civil rights [8] and in the "new left" movement of the 1960s.[9] A study by Nnaemeka[10] provides evidence that media coverage provides a form of issue legitimation and confers status on the individual actors as Lazarsfeld and Merton had pointed out earlier.[11] Investigators in "agenda setting" research have frequently concluded that media coverage of events creates citizen definition of the importance of those events.[12] One might question the "agenda setting" conclusion to the extent that it places media in a position of both initiating and *determining* public definitions of importance. Social movements ordinarily do not start with the mass media, although in certain situations there may be a precipitating effect from the media.[13]

Media coverage of conflicts is part of a process, and this coverage may well be expected to be sought by all parties to a dispute. In large-scale movements and social action, there is ordinarily a phase of problem definition and initial organizational activity, during which there is relatively little mass media coverage. Only a few people are usually involved in initial problem definition and in planning strategies and means for creating awareness of that problem among relevant publics. Much of the initiating phase of movements is devoted to interpersonal communication, which in some cases is actually clandestine. In other situations a specialized newspaper, newsletter or magazine with limited circulation is created as a vehicle for advancing the cause, as illustrated above by revolutionary groups, by some rural protest groups and by environmentalist groups in early stages.[14]

Coverage from newspapers and television generally occurs later in the process and tends to accelerate attention to social issues rather than initiate the movements themselves as is often assumed. The media coverage creates a level of attention and public concern that would not occur otherwise but exists after there has been organizational activity surrounding the issue and defining the issue as news.

Hypotheses to be Tested

The problem addressed here relates to the sources of information used by citizens at different stages in a conflict between organized protesters on the one hand and electric power cooperatives and state agencies on the other. Two hypotheses are offered. The first hypothesis is:

> As a conflict evolves from early to later stages, audience sources of information become more diversified, leading to changes in relative use of newspapers, television and personal sources by the audience, with television becoming more frequently used.

This hypothesis is based upon considerations of the role of different media in social action and in diffusion of information in social protest movements. According to diffusion theory, ideas are disseminated and transmitted in social systems through the mass media and interpersonal channels. As an issue becomes more widely disseminated among a larger public, there is an increase in coverage by a greater diversity of media. Interpersonal discussion would increase the likelihood of secondary, or "two-step flow" of communication, in which individuals receive information from more informed persons who got their information primarily from print media.[15]

Much of the literature on media in social protests is confined to the role of the printed press.[16] Development of the electronic media, particularly television, has had clear implications for the media strategies of protest organizations. Television was a major factor in the civil rights movement[17] and in the student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s[18]. While the literature is not extensive on the role of different media at different stages of movements, it appears television news reporting will frequently be heaviest for those stages of conflicts that involve open confrontation. This tendency is reinforced by the organization of television reporting and, correspondingly, by media strategies that take that organization into account. A single newscast often contains no more information, quantitatively speaking, than would a single newspaper page.[19] Observers repeatedly note the emphasis on events and the "symptoms of crisis" on TV news rather than on the issues underlying those crises.[20] Compared with news magazines, Gans found TV stories are more likely to concentrate on crimes, scandals, and disasters.[21]

In view of this prevailing focus of contemporary television news reporting, one would expect to find television coverage of a social protest concentrated on the confrontation events which have the most visual appeal and which are primarily symbolic rather than explanatory. Such emphasis on confrontation should have direct consequeneces for audience reaction. As television coverage becomes more concentrated and intensified, it should tend to become the dominant source of information among all of the media sources available.

The second hypothesis is:

> As a conflict moves from coverage primarily by local and regional newspapers to coverage by metropolitan newspapers and television, the relationship between audience knowledge and use of newspapers will decline and the relationship between knowledge and use of television as a source will increase.

This hypothesis deals with the consequences for audience knowledge about an issue when that issue becomes a media event. It is based upon the assumptions above that, as presently structured, television frequently plays a significant role in such issues after public awareness of a problem has developed and that television ultimately becomes a *dominant* source. Television has been identified in repeated studies as the "most preferred" source of news.[22] It has wide appeal across different segments of society and is the most universal of the mass media.[23] It combines audio and visual modes of communication in a form that makes it in many ways similar to interpersonal communication.[24] For these reasons groups associated with social movements develop techniques for creating media events for television coverage. The questions of the what, when, why, where and how of these media events have not been well explored.

Television news, as McClure and Patterson pointed out, rarely reports issues in depth.[25] The more superficial reporting by television, however, does not rule out the importance of television coverage in the total process. In-depth analyses may well occur via other media. Newspapers and television have complementary consequences as different parts of a system of communication. While there is competition between them, the system currently relies upon print media for the initial stages of problem definition and public awareness as well as for additional coverage at all stages of the process.

Because of television's audio-visual character, retention of knowledge from its reports in some situations might be greater than for content reported by any other medium. This audio-visual treatment may relate ongoing activities to each other more clearly, and thus render concrete what has become more abstract in newspaper coverage of the conflict. The study of conflict over the siting of a powerline across Minnesota provided an opportunity to analyze some aspects of the role of television and newspapers in social processes.[26]

Electric Power and Media Power

The powerline issue in Minnesota highlights the dependence of communities upon decision-making processes that are controlled beyond the boundaries of the local system. As with numerous cases of siting nuclear power plants, disposal of atomic wastes and establishment of refineries, the routing of high voltage powerlines involves interdependent relationships of local communities with external forces. High voltage lines require easements over private property, mostly farm land in rural areas. The eminent domain principle employed in acquiring these easements draws attention to social interdependence and to the fact that what is good for society as a whole is not necessarily consistent with the needs of communities and individuals directly affected along the route of the line. The powerline protest represents something of an historical shift in acceptance of the eminent domain principle and of the rural cooperatives which were employing it. So long as eminent domain was applied by rural electrification co-ops to introduce electrical power to rural areas that were bypassed by the older utilities, as occurred in the 1930s and 1940s, it was widely accepted. In the 1970s, however, the argument for new energy needs was greeted with wide skepticism in rural areas. Use of eminent domain by non-local cooperatives, organized primarily for building long-distance transmission lines, was then questioned strongly; symbolic of this new social definition of the problem is the fact that throughout the protest, the rural groups generally referred to the utility associations as "power companies," and not as "co-ops."

A number of potential ingredients for the development of a controversial issue were present in Minnesota in early summer of 1975. For this reason powerlines were selected as the topic for research on the relationship between conflict and knowledge. Two communities were chosen for study. One consists of a small town and the surrounding agricultural area in a rural region through which a route was proposed and eventually constructed. The other community is a semi-rural and suburban area adjacent to a metropolitan area, also surrounding the proposed and eventually accepted route of the line.

The conflict may be viewed as continuing through three separate but partially overlapping phases, which are treated as (a) a problem definition phase, (b) a bureaucratic confrontation phase and (c) a demonstration confrontation phase.

The problem definition phase. As with any social movement, there was an initial phase during which the powerline issue was defined through interaction among various groups organized in opposition to the line. This phase occurred before September 1975 and covered more than a year. In mid-1974 it became known in the area that two power utility cooperatives would soon request land owners throughout the route area to sign

easements for a 400-kilovolt DC high voltage line to run across their land. The first publicity appeared in local, primarily weekly, newspapers published in small agricultural communities along the intended route. These brief reports were generally followed in subsequent weeks by letters to the editor from various individuals, many representing countervailing organizations which were being formed. Officers in these organizations included a number of prominent farmers and others expressing opposition to the line. Most of these groups had names with acronymns, such as CURE (Counties United for Rural Environment), POLE (Protect Our Land and Environment) and KTO (Keep Towers Out). The role of the local press as a resource for organization was apparent throughout this period. In several cases, protest groups as well as utilities were providing press releases directly to the newspapers; in one case, a protest group officer had a bylined article on the front page of the local weekly. A number of the local newspapers reported concern from other local groups, including at least one chamber of commerce, and a few of the local weekly newspapers editorially expressed opposition to the line. In one county, a county board which had initially favored the line project withdrew its support, expressing the belief that it was a "state" problem whose resolution was beyond the capacity of local agencies. In April of 1975 the cooperatives applied to a state agency to select a corridor for the line, under a recently-enacted state law which had not previously been applied. This move by the cooperatives led to two sets of hearings, one for corridor selection and a second to designate a specific route. Following this formalization, the controversy moved into a new phase.

A bureaucratic confrontation phase. This phase included a period of governmental and judicial-type procedures for adjudication of the line location. These procedures, established by the state power plant siting laws, represent an application of bureaucratic controls designed to keep controversy at a level that does not involve intense interpersonal contacts.

Corridor hearings were held in the summer of 1975, and route designation hearings were held in the winter of 1975-76. Throughout this period, the principal events were these hearings and the procedures which they entailed, prescribed by state law and presumed by the earlier political supporters of that law both to encourage citizen participation and to lead toward eventual public acceptance of a solution.

All of the hearings had a formal, adversarial character, with the state agencies officially adopting a "neutral" position which in fact placed the protest group at a relative disadvantage. This disadvantage results from the fact that hearing procedures are set up to require authorization for construction from established authorities, and they put the burden of responsibility on protesting groups to show why the lines should not be

built rather than on power cooperatives to show why they *should* be built. This is a rather formidable and costly task for both groups but particularly difficult for opposition groups, which do not have the ready sources of financing that are built into the cost-plus nature of utility pricing.

Opposition groups were represented at the hearings by an attorney, as were the power associations. Technical experts, local officials and citizens testified at different hearing locations. There was much cross-examination by attorneys from both sides and much debate over scientific, technical evidence. Would the lines be harmful to agriculture? Would they endanger human health? Could they be put underground? The utility associations clearly had the greater number of expert witnesses, and this imbalance in testimony itself became a stated issue by the protest groups, who soon came to view the eventual outcome of the hearings as a foregone conclusion. The first set of hearings in the summer of 1975 was followed within weeks by the hearing officer's establishing the general corridor which, with only a few modifications, followed the route initially favored by the power associations. The route designation hearings followed that winter and culminated in a decision to permit the construction of the line on specific locations and, therefore, on specific property. These events served to reinforce the growing skepticism about the "neutrality" of the hearing process. Subsequent to the two sets of hearings, the attorney for the countervailing protest groups went to court on several issues, challenging various aspects of the corridor and routing procedures. The conflict then moved into still another phase.

Demonstration confrontation phase. This phase is marked by increasingly intense conflict and an array of confrontation strategies, including demonstrations and picketing, in an attempt to gain support for the views of the opposition groups by the ultimate legitimizers, the public-at-large. These measures represent an attempt to establish new and additional criteria for decision-making which had not been applied in the previous bureaucratic phase of formal hearings. The bureaucratic process, by formal design, had limited the hearing debate to technical questions of impact of a particular line location, primarily on agriculture and human health. The new criteria applied during the demonstration confrontation phase, which had been disallowed during the hearings, were individual property rights and community control. Application of these criteria, which strike at basic social values, led to media strategies that were highly effective in attracting coverage by metropolitan television as well as by metropolitan daily newspapers.

Following the granting of a construction permit in the spring of 1976, the power associations began land surveying, an action which led to open confrontations between organized groups and survey crews on farms near the rural community in the study. The immediate point of contention was the fact that the permit stated that construction could not start until

two months later. The power associations contended that land surveying was *not* part of construction, while protesters contended that it *was*. A temporary court injunction against further surveying was issued later in that county, but potentially violent incidents continued along other sections of the route throughout the summer of 1976. These incidents led to local requests for outside law enforcement personnel and for the state National Guard to protect surveyors.

A group of legal suits against the line project, several alleging hazardous effects, were taken under study in a single case by the state Supreme Court in early 1977. There was a halt in condemnation proceedings and construction, and no major confrontations occurred during the spring and summer of 1977. The possibility of a resumption of demonstrations was apparent throughout this period.

This extended conflict period produced a variety of attempts to mediate the conflict, such as personal intervention by the Governor, conciliation by a professional negotiator and a proposal to organize a "Science Court" to resolve the health and environmental issues. The Science Court, an idea earlier proposed for such national technological decisions as nuclear power plant siting and waste disposal, would have been a blue-ribbon panel of experts whose task it would have been to examine research evidence and produce findings of scientific fact about crucial technical issues. In this case, an issue to be decided would have been whether the line would adversely affect health of livestock and human beings.

In September of 1977, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled on all of the pending cases in favor of the power associations, thereby permitting condemnation proceedings to resume and construction to begin. The Court's written opinion indicated that the opposition groups had not met the burden of proof of hazardous effects. Construction began that fall, and opposition groups reacted immediately with a variety of protest tactics which were media events, including picketing, blocking movement of construction equipment, flag waving, singing, spraying ammonia gas at a tower construction site and passing out flowers to police and workers. Highly charged situations developed, and groups of state highway police, called out by the Governor, were at construction sites throughout fall and winter of 1977-78. Several injuries occurred, and a number of protesters were arrested. Some property destruction occurred at construction sites and storage yards, and shortly before March of 1978, a power association guard was shot and injured slightly. No arrests had been made in connection with that incident. Meanwhile, construction continued and was nearing completion in the study area by March of 1978.

Surveys and Content Studies

Samples of adult respondents were interviewed in both the rural and suburban areas at four points in time. The first wave of interviews was in September of 1975, early in the bureaucratic phase, just before the determination by the state agency of the corridor in which the line would be located, and prior to heavy coverage by nonlocal media. The second wave of interviewing was conducted in February of 1976, as route designation hearings were being completed and shortly before the controversy had shifted from a bureaucratic phase to a demonstration phase. The third wave was in March and April of 1977, following the first summer of unrest and various legal appeals against the line. The fourth wave was in March of 1978, following a fall and winter of extremely intense and potentially violent confrontations. At this point, the conflict was dying down and the countervailing groups had lost.

A different methodology was used for the first two waves and the later waves of interviews. In the first two waves, respondents were chosen by area probability sampling procedures and were interviewed in their homes by persons trained for the project. The third and fourth waves of interviews were conducted by telephone interviewers, also trained for the project, using a sample of telephone listings in the rural area and a random digit dialing method in the suburban area, according to prefixes covering the communities under study.[27] A total of 1,104 respondents were interviewed in these studies. The totals for each of the waves in the rural area were 136 in the first, 111 in the second, 167 in the third and 120 in the fourth. In the suburban area, there were 140, 91, 200 and 139 cases in the four successive waves. All interviews had identical measures for the key variables, listed below.

Knowledge about the issue. Respondents were asked: "Have you seen or heard anything about the question of high voltage powerlines, or a powerline corridor, in this area?" If the initial answer was "yes," the respondent was asked the open-end question: " What have you seen or heard?"

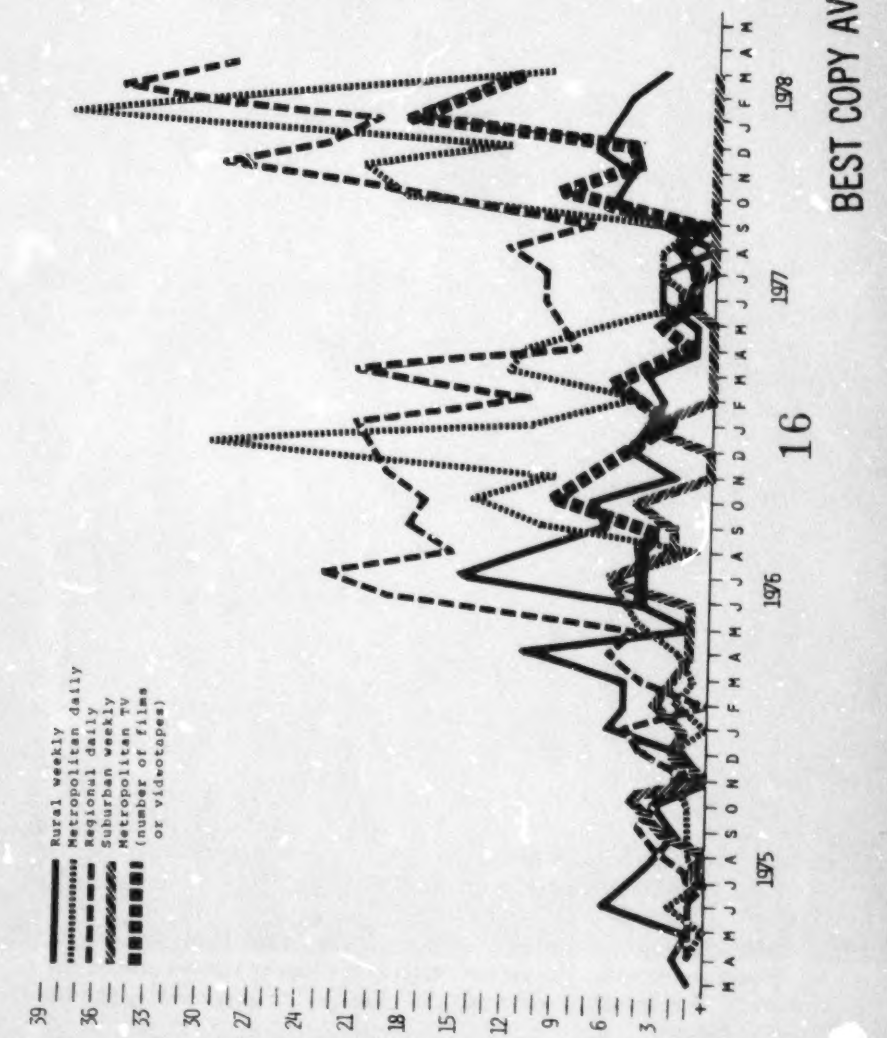
Sources of information about the issue. Following the knowledge measure, respondents were asked "Where have you seen or heard about this topic? Has it been from other persons; from television news; from radio news; from newspaper articles?" The interviewer then checked all responses made.

Perception of the issue as conflictive. The item for this measure was "Would you say that the powerline issue is a touchy subject around here, or not?" A respondent who said "yes" was treated as perceiving the issue as conflictive.

Perception of the importance of the issue. The item was "Considering everything that is going on around here, would you rate the powerline

FIGURE 1

Coverage of Powerline Issue in Four Newspapers
and One Television Station
March 1975 to April 1978



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question as a very important issue, a fairly important issue, or an unimportant issue?"

Perceptions about direct effect of the line. The question was "Would you say, then, that the question of a high voltage powerline does affect you directly, or does not affect you directly?"

Opinions about the powerline. A pro-powerline scale was constructed from responses to four agree-disagree items: "New high voltage transmission lines should be built in (this county) wherever the electric power association says is best"; "The proposed high voltage transmission line should not be built anywhere in (this county)"; "From what I have heard, the high voltage transmission line would be very harmful to agriculture"; and "According to scientific evidence I've heard, the high voltage transmision line would not be harmful to human health."

Media content on the powerline issue was measured in four newspapers, including the weekly serving the rural town, a weekly serving the suburban area, a regional daily in the same county as the rural town, and a metropolitan daily widely read in the suburb and by a few respondents in the rural town. Although television coverage of the issue was not monitored as it occurred, a check of records at a major metropolitan station made it possible to count the frequency of use of films and videotapes by that station concerning the issue during each month of the study period.

Newspaper content was quantified in column inches at different points in time. Statements in the content were scored as attributed to *positions* (such as viewpoints, demands, or proposals) or *actions* (such as initiation of construction or organization of a demonstration) taken by three groups involved in the conflict. The groups were the power associations, the public agencies (such as the environmental quality board that conducted hearings) and the protest groups.

Newspaper Content Findings

Patterns of coverage among the weekly newspapers, the regional daily newspaper, the metropolitan daily, and the television station are presented in Figure 1. Progression of coverage from one medium to another during succeeding phases of conflict is clear. The early peaks in coverage, in order, were in the rural weekly, in the regional daily, and in the suburban weekly. The metropolitan daily coverage and metropolitan television coverage reached their peaks last of all. During the period up to the summer of 1975, the principal coverage was in the rural weekly. Coverage in the regional daily increased sharply in the summer of 1976, following the first confrontations. The metropolitan daily coverage increased later, not surpassing regional daily coverage until November of 1976. The metropolitan television station provided no coverage of the

issue until June of 1976.[28]. From that point on, however, the issue received frequent and prominent mention on television news so that by the end of 1976 the station described the powerline as the state's second biggest TV news story of the year. The first was a taconite disposal issue in northeastern Minnesota, another issue pitting local interests against those of society at large.[29]

There also is a shift in the focus of the media coverage, with news articles up through the winter of 1976 concentrating on differences between farmers and power cooperatives, questions of corridor location, the health and hazards questions, hearings and related procedures. Subsequently the procedures themselves came under challenge and much of the attention shifted to the state agencies, their prior conduct of the hearings, and implementation of laws and regulations concerning powerline siting. At this point, it was clear that the decision would be made by the state agencies and not by agreements between the land owners as individuals and the power cooperatives.

Within newspaper content, attribution to different parties to the conflict varied according to type of community and newspaper (Table 1). These data show that the regional and metropolitan daily papers, as well as the rural weekly, gave more coverage to the protest groups than to the

TABLE 1
Attribution of Position and Action Statements
About the Powerline Controversy in Content
Of Four Minnesota Newspapers, 1975-78

	Paynesville (weekly)		Osseo–Maple Grove (weekly)		St. Cloud (daily)		Minneapolis (daily)	
Statements attributed to:	Position*	Action**	Position	Action	Position	Action	Position	Action
Power Association	28%	23%	63%	40%	20%	23%	16%	21%
Public Agencies	30	44	22	33	36	40	43	40
Protest Groups	42	33	15	27	44	37	41	39
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	(150)	(742)	(640)	(176)	(4376)	(3682)	(2139)	(2326)

* "Position" statements refer to viewpoints, demands or proposals attributed to the respective groups.
** "Action" statements include references to such outcomes as organization of a demonstration, initiation of construction, calling of a specific meeting, or initiating a legal process.

power associations. An explanation of these patterns of coverage must take into account the particular nature of the power line issue and its relevance to different communities. The groups protesting originally were minorities, representing their own property and individual interests, and were counterposed against acts of rural electric cooperatives which historically were powerful, established agencies in rural communities. In this case, however, the power associations developing the transmission lines were seen as external, metropolitan-based organizations acting against the interests of the local communities. The protest groups initially emphasized the contention that the lines would produce electrical power for the metropolitan area rather than for the rural communities through which the lines would pass. As the controversy developed, the fundamental issue became that of eminent domain, or the question of procedures for taking property of certain individuals for the larger social good. The protest groups contended that the decision was being railroaded through and that their concerns were not being given a fair hearing. In making this argument, they were appealing to a general public value regarding individual property ownership and the conditions under which private ownership can be overturned. Various polls showed considerable support for the protest groups, which appeared to be based on the generalized belief that "if it can happen to them, it can happen to all of us." Thus, while the electric cooperatives represented established interests of the larger system, the protest groups were also speaking to a societal-level value.

Among the regional and metropolitan dailies and the rural weekly, there are more statements attributed to the actions and positions of the protest groups than to those of the power associations. The exception to this pattern is in the suburban weekly, whose coverage was limited primarily to the early stages of the controversy, before the question of fairness of procedure and the discussion of the principle of eminent domain had become a central aspect of the issue. The suburban weekly did not have extensive interaction with protest groups; its primary sources were the press releases of the power associations and statements from a single resident of that suburb who was a member of the citizen's advisory committee. The positions of the protest groups received relatively little coverage by that newspaper, a condition which is to be expected in the absence of a strong countervailing organization.[30]

These patterns in which reporting moves from one medium to another, both in total content and in type of content, provide interesting hypotheses for further research. The sequence of media coverage may reflect deliberate strategies of protest groups initially to gain space in the local newspaper, primarily through statements of position and philosophy, to gain awareness and legitimation of the protest organization's perspectives, and to establish questions about the credibility of the

power cooperative's procedure and goals. While continued local coverage may make the issue more visible to distant urban papers, it is apparently not until organized confrontations and the appearance of consequences beyond the local scene that media with large audiences give the issues heavy, action-oriented coverage. This does not support the idea that media *create* problems or issues. They may contribute to the process of public definition of a problem through dissemination of information, but they do not generate problem situations. To assume that the media create problems not only attributes awesome power to them, but it also places the media in the ultimate role of controlling the type and direction of change in a system.

Sources of Information at Different Stages

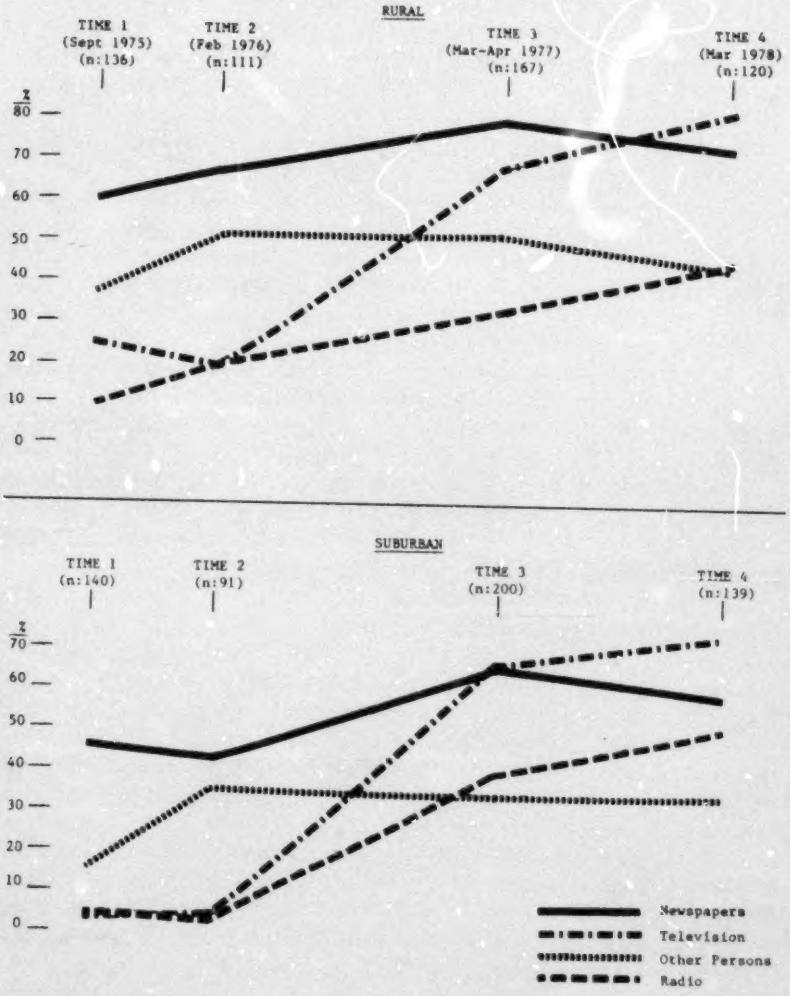
The first hypothesis, that television sources become more frequently cited by the audience as the conflict evolves, is supported by the evidence gathered in the four waves of interviews (Figure 2). In each community the most frequently named source in the first wave (September 1975) was newspapers, with personal sources a distant second, and television third. These findings are consistent with those of diffusion research, in that first information about an idea or innovation comes initially to the public at large from mass media sources, in this case newspapers.[31] Personal contact was more frequently cited as a source of information in the second wave, moving from a distant second to a close second to newspapers.

The increasing role of television appears in the third wave of interviews, when mention of that medium increases sharply to over 60% in the rural area and to 67% in the suburbs. This increase occurs along with continued high mention of newspapers — 78% in the rural community and 66% in the suburban area. By the fourth wave of interviews, television stands out as the most frequently mentioned source of information, cited by 81% in the rural area and by 73% in the suburban area, surpassing mention of newspapers in each case.

Especially noteworthy about the third and fourth wave findings is that mention of personal sources changes very little in either community after the second wave of interviews in February of 1976. It appears that in this situation discussion with other persons, when it occurs, becomes largely a matter of exchanging or clarifying points of view rather than providing new details. After the issue becomes well defined, there may be a change in the public mind set. Audience members then follow specific events, such as confrontations, actions of agencies and courts, and protest activities which come directly from the media and are placed in the context of an existing problem definition by media audiences. In the field confrontation phase, actions of agencies, the Governor, the courts and law enforcement agencies are being relayed primarily by the media through

FIGURE 2

Level of Use of Sources of Information About Powerline Issues at Four Points in Time In Two Community Areas



reporting systems which are structurally outside the interpersonal communication system. Where actions of the Governor, state agencies and courts are concerned, one would not expect information to be relayed by interpersonal networks; these actions are reported directly to media through press conferences and then directly to the audience. One might speculate that television, with its trusted Cronkite-type personalities and its face-to-face nature, may become an aspect of mass communication which is a functional equivalent to personal communication, thereby ruling out the "stepwise" flow of information that might occur with other media.[32]

Some evidence supporting the above interpretation of audience reaction comes from a categorization of topics mentioned by respondents when they were asked "what they had seen or heard" about the issue (Figure 3). In both sample areas, there was a clear shift in content of responses. In the first two waves, one of the most frequently mentioned aspects was location, such as the county, town or property where the line was expected to be built. Also, there was more mention in the early interviews than in later ones of technical subjects, such as ozone, effect on human and animal health, effect on agriculture, and need for more electricity. Fewer than 10% of the respondents in either area, in the first wave, mentioned specific events such as meetings, protests, or agency actions.

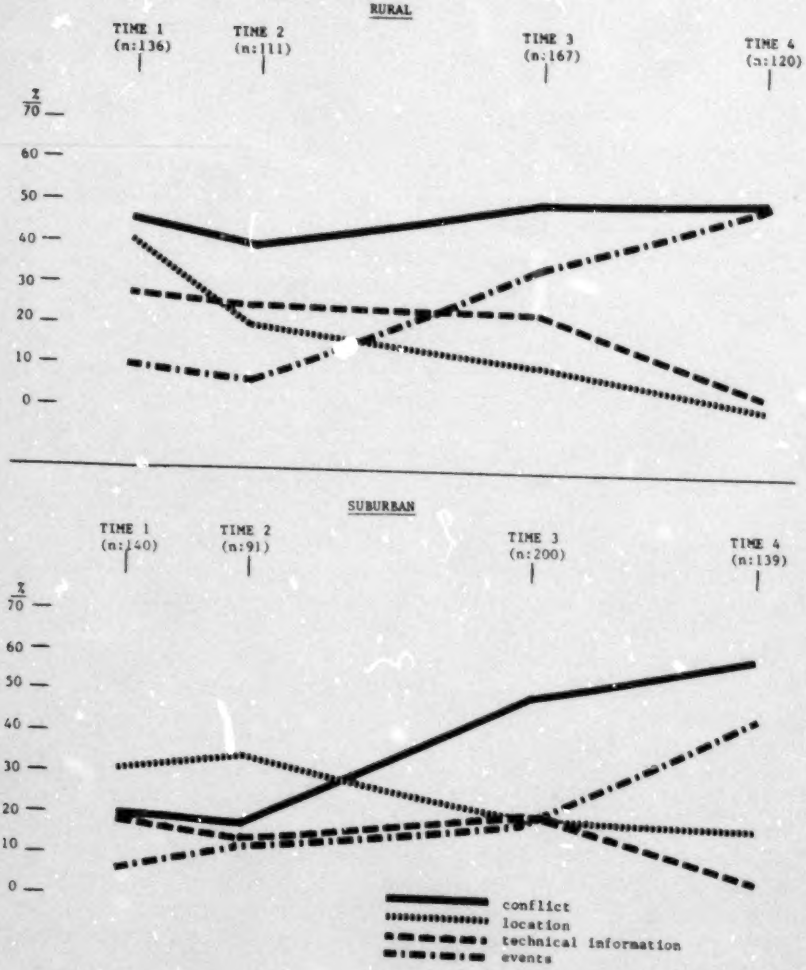
As the process moved to new phases, the pattern of respondent recall shifted markedly to more frequent portrayal of the issue as a conflict situation and to related events such as protests, police action, arrests, mediation meetings, and attempts to set up a Science Court.

Structural Differences and Communication

Several findings in Figures 2 and 3 indicate differences between the rural and suburban areas. In a more homogeneous and less populated rural community, once a conflict develops, it tends to dominate attention as the "only show in town." In the suburb, by contrast, even though the line was known to be planned through the middle of the sample area, the greater social diversity means there are more issues and no one issue is as likely to dominate attention as in the rural area. It should be noted, however, that an issue may well dominate the concerns of any special interest group in the suburbs, and, to the extent that an issue becomes universal, it may dominate an entire suburb in spite of the greater structural diversity. Water pollution from septic tanks with its universal impact is such an issue.

Two principal findings support the structural perspective above as a basis for analyzing communication patterns. One is that at each wave the level of attention to each medium, with the exception of radio and televi-

FIGURE 3
Percent Mentioning Different Aspects of Power Line Topic at Four Points in Time In Two Community Areas



sion in wave 3 (Figure 2), tends to be higher in the rural community than in the suburb. A second finding (Figure 3) is the higher perception of conflict initially in the rural area compared with lower initial perception of conflict in the suburban area. This perception of conflict increases with new phases of the issue and continued media attention.

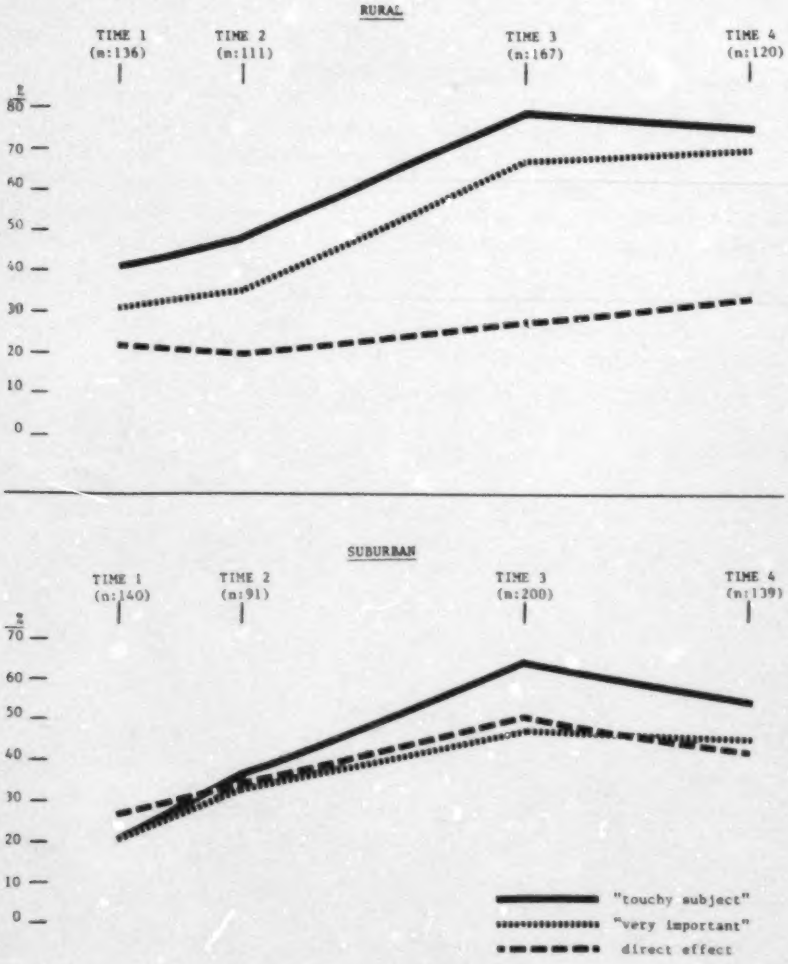
This increase perception of conflict in the more diverse suburban area, as the controversy moved into a confrontation phase, may be interpreted as a measure of success of the confrontation strategies of the countervailing protest groups. Media events of this type are designed to achieve attention of the larger public and to define the conditions basic to the conflict. Attention to the conflict appears to have increased sharply in the suburb, judging from the open-end responses presented in Figure 3 which show a consistent increase from approximately 20 to 60% of suburbanites viewing the situation as one characterized by conflict.

Still another illustration of the different perception of the issue in structurally different areas is provided by Figure 4, which indicates the change in response to three items. One is the measure of the issue as conflictive, a question of whether the respondent regards the issue as a "touchy" subject. A second is whether the respondent regards the issue as "very important." The third is whether the respondent agrees that the issue affects him or her directly.

The percent calling the issue "a touchy subject" is higher at each wave of interviews in the rural area than in the suburban area, again reflecting the greater intensity of a conflict in the more homogeneous social structure. Judging the issue as "very important" increases in a way parallel to judging the issue as "touchy" in both areas; the difference is that in the first three waves the two measures get almost identical percentages of response in the suburban area, whereas rural respondents are more likely to perceive conflict (i.e., the "touchy" nature) than to perceive it as "very important."

While importance ratings are higher in the rural than suburban areas in three of the four waves, the responses to the "direct effect" question are different. Suburban respondents, compared with rural respondents, are *more* likely to perceive a direct effect of the line on themselves as individuals but are *less* likely to regard the issue as important or as conflictive. This evidence appears to reflect differences in structural diversity of the two areas. In the rural community, the issue is important not because it is seen by a large number of individuals as affecting them directly *as individuals*, but because of their recognition of the issue as a community-wide problem. In the suburban area, there is a greater tendency to identify with groups that have particular concerns, such as power, water pollution, or street improvement. Therefore, in this more pluralistic system, level of rating of the issue as "important" is tied more closely to

FIGURE 4
Perceptions of Conflict Intensity, Importance And Direct Effect of Powerline Issue



its perceived direct effect on the individual. Based on the different social organization of rural and urban areas, this pattern might be expected as a result of differential socialization.

Knowledge and Conflict

The second hypothesis is that as the conflict moves to succeeding phases, the relationship between accuracy of knowledge of the issue and use of print sources declines, while the relationship between accuracy of knowledge of the issue and use of television as a source increases. Data relevant to this hypothesis (Table 2) are based upon correlations between use of media sources and the dependent variable of accuracy of knowledge, which is dichotomized. Each respondent is scored as either making one accurate statement or more about the topic or none at all. This dichotomous scoring of accuracy of knowledge was chosen because, even though knowledge ranged as high as six or seven accurate statements per respondent, the distributions were highly skewed toward the upper end.[33]

TABLE 2

Pearson Correlations Between Knowledge* and Sources Of Information** About Powerline Controversy in Two Minnesota Sample Areas at Four Points in Time

	Suburban				Rural			
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
n	(140)	(91)	(200)	(139)	(136)	(111)	(167)	(120)
Newspaper	.70	.55	.34	.30	.48	.31	.21	.44
Radio	.21	.21	.35	.33	.08	.17	.25	.27
Television	***	***	.58	.21	.20	.22	.35	.42
Other persons	.27	.41	.10	.14	.21	.15	.11	.04

* Because of skewness in the data, knowledge is scored dichotomously, so that 1 having accurate knowledge and 0 one.

** Each source of information is also scored dichotomously, according to whether the source was mentioned or not for information about the powerline.

*** In each case only four respondents mentioned television as a source.

The hypothesis receives partial support from the evidence. In the rural area, there is a decline in the correlations between accuracy of knowledge and use of newspapers as a source through the third wave of interviews, dropping from .48 in the first to .31 in the second and .21 in the third, followed by an increase to .44 in the fourth wave. The correlation between accuracy of knowledge and use of television in the rural area increased progressively as hypothesized, from .20 in the first, to .22 in the second, to .35 in the third and to .42 in the fourth.

In the suburban area, there is a steady decline in the strength of the correlation between accuracy of knowledge and use of newspapers, which is supportive of the hypothesis. For television, however, the pattern is variable. In both areas the third wave was the only case in which use of television as a source was more highly associated with accuracy of knowledge than was any other source.

Television became an increasingly important medium in the controversy, as a further breakdown of the data on level of use of the media indicates (Table 3). The percentage of persons mentioning *both* television and newspapers as sources increased in the suburban area, from 1% in the first wave, to 3% in the second and to 50% in the third, dropping slightly to 48% in the fourth. In the rural area, the increase was from 17% in each of the first and second waves to 50% in the third and to 66% in the fourth.

The percent mentioning television *alone* as a source also increased in both areas over time, while the percent mentioning newspapers alone

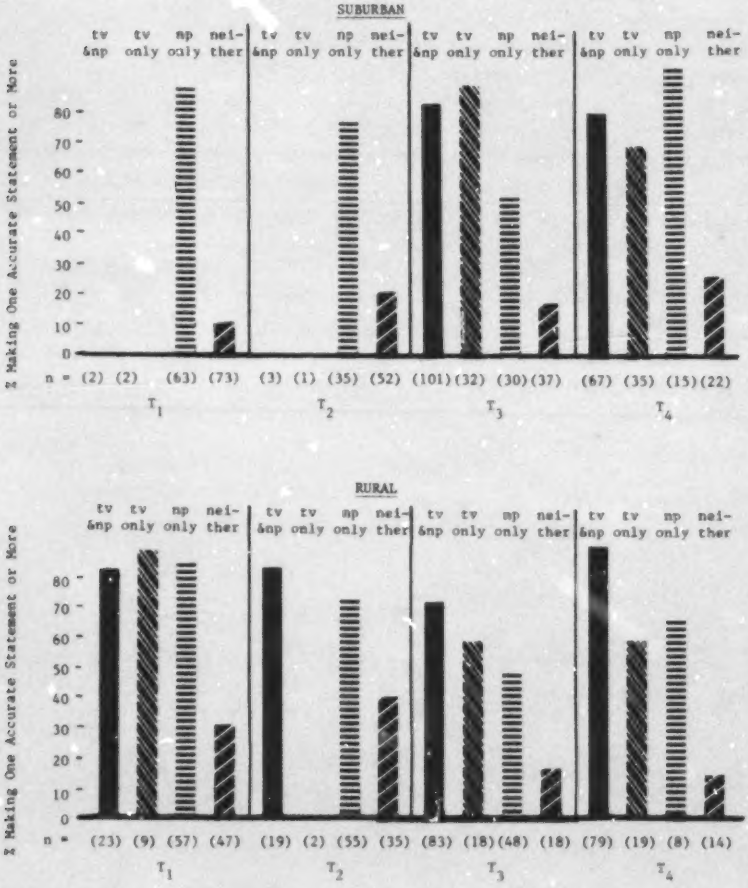
TABLE 3

Use of Television and Newspapers As
Sources of Information about the Powerline Issue
In Two Minnesota Sample Areas At Four Points in Time

	Suburban				Rural			
Percent using:	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
n	(140)	(91)	(200)	(135)	(136)	(111)	(167)	(120)
Both TV & newspapers	1%	3%	50%	48%	17%	17%	50%	66%
Television alone	1%	1%	16%	25%	7%	2%	11%	16%
Newspapers alone	45%	38%	15%	11%	42%	50%	29%	7%

FIGURE 5

Percent Having Accurate Knowledge about Power Line Issue According to Use of Television and Newspaper Sources At Four Points in Time



generally declined. The percent mentioning television alone increased in the suburban area from 1% in the first to 25% in the fourth wave. In the rural area, it increased from 7% in the first to 16% in the fourth. The percent mentioning newspapers alone, in the suburban area, declined from 45% in the first wave to 11% in the fourth. In the rural area, the percent mentioning newspapers alone was 42% in the first wave, increasing to 50% in the second wave, then declining sharply to 29% in the third wave and to 7% in the fourth.

Analysis of the use of television and newspapers as sources alone and in combination (Figure 5) indicates the complexity of interpreting the impact of different media on accuracy of respondent knowledge. The critical points for comparison are the third and fourth waves, when television had become a major source of information. In both the rural and suburban area during the third wave, respondents who used television alone or with newspapers were more likely to make accurate knowledge statements than were respondents who used newspapers alone. In the fourth wave, the few respondents using newspapers alone were more likely to have accurate knowledge than persons using television alone. It is important to add, however, that in that fourth wave television is the single source for more than twice as many persons as newspapers. An issue for further analysis should be the effect of accuracy of knowledge on social action processes. Indeed, if accuracy is not strategically important at critical stages of a conflict, television may be the preferred medium for both action groups and audiences.

In general, then, as the conflict moves to succeeding phases, television clearly becomes an increasingly significant medium. A point was reached when television was mentioned by more persons than any other source and, in the fourth wave in both areas, it was used *alone* by more than twice as many as used newspapers alone.

All of the foregoing assumes the present structuring and utilization of media in the U.S. culture. It is entirely possible in this culture, or in other cultures, that the broadcast media may play significantly different roles in the action process at different points in time. It is because of this that the holistic systems perspective requires an understanding of the role of media subsystems as a part of, rather than apart from, the total social system.

These findings should be viewed along with the fact, indicated above, that the nature of the information held by respondents changed sharply as the conflict moved toward a stage where it was dominated by media events and television coverage. In the third and fourth waves, responses of individuals tended to concentrate on the conflict itself and related events, with technical information and the question of location mentioned with decreasing frequency. As a medium with an audio-visual character, television news, as generally organized, concentrates on events which

can be visualized. Particularly, at the time of this study, television news reporting was not generally as likely to provide background information as was newspaper reporting.

Opinions About the Powerline

One of the most cherished notions about information campaigns and community controversies is that understanding a proposed project leads to more support of it. Much of the available evidence, however, contradicts the notion.[34] Data from this study also indicate that having more information does not necessarily mean holding a particular opinion.[35]

For purposes of studying the relationship between opinions and other variables, the pro-powerline scale was employed. The correlations (Table 4) show that generally the relationships between support of the powerline and level of knowledge are low. There is no tendency for more informed persons to be more supportive of the powerline than less informed persons. Also, the relationships between support of the powerline and use of newspapers or television as sources are not high. All are below .15 except for the second wave in the rural area, where the TV-opinion scale correla-

TABLE 4
Pearson Correlations Between Pro-Power Line Scale and Other Variables

	Suburban				Rural			
Correlation, Pro-Power line scale and:	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4
n	(140)	(91)	(200)	(139)	(136)	(111)	(167)	(120)
Knowledge	-.01	.01	.05	-.07	-.14	-.13	-.05	.00
TV as Source	.12	-.13	-.01	.05	-.14	-.32	-.11	-.05
Newspaper as Source	-.06	-.08	-.04	-.12	-.07	-.26	-.04	.03
Perception of Issue as "Touchy"	-.14	-.16	-.21	-.32	-.22	-.30	-.19	-.27
Perception of Issue as "Very Important"	-.19	-.32	-.22	-.13	-.17	-.23	-.05	-.35

tion is -.32 and the newspaper-opinion correlation is -.26. In these latter instances, it appears that there was a relationship between source of information and an anti-powerline stance. The correlation between perception of conflict and pro-powerline opinions are higher and all in a negative direction, ranging from -.14 to .-32. In each case, the correlations indicate that persons perceiving the issues as "touchy" tend to be less favorable to the power line.

In the rural area the correlations between use of newspapers as sources and perception of conflict were direct and consistent, ranging from .22 to .28. In the suburban area, these correlations varied more, from a high of .52 in the second wave to a low of .01 in the fourth. Correlations between use of television and perception of conflict ranged from .14 to .27 in the rural area and from -.30 to .20 in the suburban area. These data suggest that attention to media, particularly newspapers, may have led to greater perception of the issue as a controversy, thereby reinforcing a definition of the situation that highlights the struggle and elicits sympathy for the opponents' basic argument about the unfairness of the eminent domain procedure. This pattern of media effects, achievement of which is a frequent goal of countervailing groups in social controversy, appears to merit further study.

Media Coverage and Social Action

It appears that the existence of an atmosphere of organized social conflict maintains the attention of the media, and that this is recognized as such by leaders of social protest. It also appears that the process varies systematically according to both the stage of the process and the characteristics of social structure in which it occurs.

For social conflict theory, this analysis suggests a refinement of the functional perspective regarding the consequences of conflict for stimulation of communicative processes. One of the basic assumptions about conflict is that it may have positive, sociating effects as well as negative, dissociating effects. As Simmel and later Coser pointed out, a conflict situation may provide a vitality and articulation of goals and positions.[36] This implies a stimulation of relevant communication, including an increase in the generation, distribution and acquisition of relevant information. Results here suggest the possiblility that the relationship between conflict intensity and communication flow is conditioned by the current phase of the controversy. A hypothesis for further testing is that communication of formal knowledge, or "knowledge about" an issue, is most likely to increase with rising intensity during a more formalized phase of conflict occurrence than during a more informal, demonstration-confrontation phase. So long as a case is primarily "in court," in the literal sense or in a bureaucratic proceeding, the formal arrangements provide

for a more or less sequential articulation of arguments, including those from expert sources, which will be reflected by the media coverage. When, on the other hand, the conflict is in a confrontation phase outside the bureaucratic routine, the challenge itself becomes the issue, particularly when the challenge is leveled directly at positions or agencies of authority. Such a challenge highlights the question of social stability, recovery of which as a rule reinforces formal authority. In these circumstances, the communication within the confrontation as well as media reports about it are primarily about the challenging statements and actions and responses to them. It would be expected that increasing intensity in such a phase will generate an increased amount of information through more media, but information unlikely to contain the type of formal knowledge generally sought for citizen participation in decision-making. Testing such a hypothesis would require, ideally, longitudinal data that allow for comparing outcomes with different issues following differing phases.

The analysis also raises a question about the outcomes of communication that occur in a conflict. In this case, all major decisions in hearings and courts were in favor of the line. The corridor selection by the state agency in the autumn of 1975, was, with a few modifications, the corridor which the power associations preferred. The state Supreme Court eventually ruled that the procedure and decisions followed by the state agency were legally correct. In such circumstances, it is not the public exchange of information or the distribution of public opinion about the issue that is decisive. A bureaucratic process is in control, and decisions on such projects are made and justified according to legal statutes governing the rights and obligations of participants and specifying the procedures for resolution of such conflicts.

Such outcomes raise questions about media events as protest strategies. This controversy evolved from local coverage alone to regional coverage and then to a phase involving heavy coverage by metropolitan newspapers and television stations, whose news programs reach into scores of communities that receive these stations' programs through cable hookups. The question might well arise whether the course of the controversy might have been different had the protesting organizations tried and succeeded in getting metropolitan media coverage at an earlier stage in the process. A proposal to locate a hazardous waste disposal site in the metropolitan suburbs was dropped by a metropolitan council after community hearings were covered repeatedly by television news teams, in each case showing hundreds of angry citizens packed in a hearing room.

A big difference between the powerline protest and the hearings on waste disposal is that demonstrations and extra-legal tactics followed failure of the groups in the powerline case to prevail in the

bureaucratic processes. If, on the other hand, organized protest had occurred in conjunction with the hearings, it may have had some impact on those decisions. Once a bureaucratic structure is committed to a particular decision, such as establishing a powerline corridor and a specific route, such decisions are especially resistant to change. The stability of the structure and the validity of the process come under challenge when reversal of decisions takes place.

In the case of the powerline issue, the fact that hearings on corridor selection and route designation were not covered by television (and only at a minimal level by metropolitan daily newspapers) may result from opposition groups not using demonstration tactics at that particular stage. By working through an attorney, they were working "within the system" established for siting power plants and lines. If they had entered the controversy with protest strategies before there was agency commitment to the line, the outcome might have been different. Also, the use of the media at different stages would have been altered. As has been observed repeatedly in citizen action campaigns of the past 20 years, the visible demonstration is a principal tactic for achieving sustained coverage and should bring TV into the action process at a much earlier point. This is not to say that any hastily assembled picket line will achieve major media attention. It is the organized and sustained demonstration, clearly for the purpose of influencing a decision, that is most likely to create the definition of a conflict situation and the media coverage that in turn may enhance the probability of success.

Summary

One might well ask whether the sequential stages of this controversy are unique or whether they present a pattern which may recur on a variety of issues. It may be fairly typical to find bureaucratic confrontation phases that are separate from demonstration confrontation phases, particularly when there are issues that are not addressed by the formal hearings. The Toronto airport controversy took this form, when protesting citizens literally faced down bulldozers following a series of hearings about the need for and location of the proposed facility.[37] As with the powerline controversy, a fundamental issue in the protest against the Toronto airport was the exercise of the principle of eminent domain and its attendant expropriation of private property.

There are other cases where the power base is broader initially so that the confrontation media strategy is a relatively minor aspect of the dispute in the long run. In recent waste disposal decision-making in Minnesota, elaborate and extensive hearings were held by a state agency as part of the process of elimination of communities from a list of potential disposal sites. In some of these communities, organized demonstrations

followed the proceedings, although not on a scale remotely resembling the powerline protest. A principal reason is that, unlike the question of building high-voltage powerlines, the need to dispose of wastes is socially unquestioned; it is simply a matter of where and how. The opposition that did develop to waste disposal siting may well have benefitted from the powerline controversy in at least two ways. First, there was clearly concern throughout the state agencies involved that waste disposal siting not become "another powerline problem." In addition, the opponents very effectively drew support from a long-standing coalition of rural legislators to forestall the establishment of disposal sites for hazardous wastes. In 1984 the state law under which waste disposal programs are authorized was modified so as to temporarily avoid location of any sites for disposal of hazardous wastes in outlying communities and put the immediate emphasis instead on waste processing and further research on other alternatives for dealing with the problem.

As society becomes increasingly diversified, one might expect increased use of bureaucratic procedures such as those followed in the powerline and waste disposal matters. It may well be that in the majority of these cases, the decisions arrived at through such procedures will take effect without challenge, particularly as the agency personnel learn from experience of previous organized protests. Challenges may be more likely to occur where (a) fundamental issues exist which are not addressed by the original bureaucratic proceedings and (b) the countervailing groups have sufficient resources and organizational capacity either to mount a direct challenge or to get the support of a broadly-based coalition of political leadership as occurred in the case of the opponents to siting of land-disposal sites for hazardous wastes. When conditions for a direct challenge exist, it can be expected that resources employed will include the mass media, particularly television. When print as well as television are engaged in reporting a highly intense encounter, information may be sown wide but left with shallow roots. The possibility that the early stages of a controversy provide the richer contribution to generation of information about the issue is a major hypothesis for further research.

NOTES

1. James A. Leith, *Media and Revolution* (Toronto: CBS Publications, 1968).
2. Lawrence Goodwin, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978).
3. Carl C. Taylor, *The Farmer's Movement, 1620-1920* (New York: American Book Co., 1953), pp. 39-40.
4. Robert Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1955), pp. 37-46.
5. Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1914), pp. 27-31.

6. For earlier reports about the background of the powerline conflict, see Phillip J. Tichenor, George A. Donohue and Clarice N. Olien, *Community Conflict and the Press* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980). That volume discusses in detail the circumstances under which the first press reports occurred in 1974 and 1975, and includes several cross-sectional data tables from the first two waves of interviews, including a comparison with two communities where the controversy had not become intense at that particular time. That volume, however, does not provide a longitudinal analysis of the conflict and contains no evidence concerning the media coverage over time, the audience reaction toward television coverage, or the role of different media at different stages of the conflict. It contains no data from the fourth wave of interviews. The longitudinal analysis of the powerline study is unique to this monograph.

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8. Hodding Carter III, in Jack Lyle, ed. *The Black American and the Press* (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1968), pp. 33; and Ben Bagdikian, *The Information Machines: Their Impact on Men and the Media* (New York: Harper, 1971).

9. Hugh Graham, *Crisis in Print: Desegregation and the Press in Tennessee* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 1967); and Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).

10. Tony I.O. Nnaemeka, "Issue Legitimation, Mass Media Functions and Public Knowledge of Social Issues," unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1976.

11. Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Milton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action," in Lyman Bryson, ed., *The Communication of Ideas* (New York: Harper, 1948).

12. Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36:176-87 (Summer, 1972).

13. J. Rorty, "Thirty Days that Shook Norwalk," *Commentary Magazine*, (April, 1954). See also *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Kerner Commission) Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office (1966), p. 370; P.L. Pitcher, R.L. Hamblin and J.L.L. Miller "The Diffusion of Collective Violence," *American Sociological Review*, 43:23-35 (February, 1978); and James Coleman, *Community Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

14. Clay Schoenfeld, "Environmental Communications Today," *Journal of Environmental Education*, 10:43-48 (Spring, 1979). See also Leith *loc. cit.* and Morlan, *loc. cit.*

15. North Central Regional Publication No. 1, "How Farm People Accept New Ideas," Special Report No. 15, Iowa State University Agricultural Extension Service (Ames, Iowa, 1955). See also Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld *Personal Influence* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955).

16. Morlan, *loc. cit*; Taylor, *loc. cit*; Graham, *loc. cit*; and James O. Nall, *The Tobacco Night Riders of Kentucky and Tennessee, 1905-1909* (Louisville, Ky.: The Standard Printing Co., 1939).

17. David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1978).

18. Gitlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-65.

19. Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), pp. 10-13.

20. Barry Cole, ed., *Television Today: A Close-up View* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981); John Birt, "There Is a Bias in Television Journalism," in Barry Cole, *ibid.*, pp. 153-

157; quote from Richard Salant on "The hottest TV news controversies," in Barry Cole, *ibid.*, p. 135; Ron Powers, *The Newscasters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978); and Don R. Pember, *Mass Media in America* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1981).

21. Herbert J. Gans, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

22. *An Extended View of Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Mass Media* (New York: Television Information Office, 1977).

23. Jack Lyle, "Contemporary Functions of the Mass Media," in David L. Lange, Robert K. Daker and Sandra J. Ball, eds., *Violence and the Mass Media: Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Preventions of Violence* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1969).

24. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

25. Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Elections* (New York: Putnam, 1976).

26. This reasoning might seem contrary to earlier literature indicating low correlations between use of television as a source and knowledge about public affairs issues. However, it appears that interpretation of these low correlations should take into account the organization of television reporting, which often leads to superficial coverage of issues. This point was made explicit by McClure and Patterson in the 1972 election study, along with the finding that where superficial reporting occurred, viewing television news made less difference in respondent knowledge than did reading newspapers. In those instances in which television reporting resources are concentrated on a particular area or issue, as occurred over a period of time on the powerline issue, the greater amount of content produced on TV news programs would be expected to contribute more to knowledge than where TV news coverage is routine. It might also be noted that Clarke and Fredin found higher correlations between use of the TV medium and knowledge for national and international affairs than for local issues, which as a rule get less TV news coverage. See Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McLure, *loc. cit.*, and Peter Clarke and Eric Fredin, "Newspapers, television, and political reasoning," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 41:143-160, 1978.

27. The change from face-to-face interviewing in the first two waves to telephone interviewing in the third wave is a shift in measurement procedure, and the consequences of this shift for the data under study are not completely known. The telephone sample in the suburban area tended to be younger than the earlier sample based on household selection, but age is not strongly related to choice of medium or level of knowledge about this issue.

28. Not included in Figure 1 is coverage by a regional televison station, located about 60 miles from the rural area, which did provide some coverage of the power line issue before June of 1976. No check of records from that station is included in the study. In the metropolitan area, records of film and videotape coverage were checked at two major stations. The one included in Figure 1 had the highest level of coverage during each month and coverage at both stations peaked in the same periods. Newspaper content data were gathered through the cooperation of the Minnesota Historical Society.

29. Social controversy involved in the taconite disposal issue, and related communication processes and knowledge, were also studied in other longitudinal research by G.A. Donohue, C.N. Olien and P.J. Tichenor, "Communities, Pollution and Fight for Survival," *Journal of Environmental Education*, 6:29-37 (Fall, 1974).

30. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, *Community Conflict and the Press*, *loc. cit.*

31. Use of radio as a source of information was not expected to reach high levels in this study and, in line with that expectation, radio generally was not mentioned frequently by respondents. Radio usually ranked fourth (after newspapers, television and other persons) and in no case did it rank higher than third. Radio was, however, mentioned with increasing frequency in subsequent waves, particularly in the suburban area.

32. Katz and Lazarsfeld, *loc. cit.* Other studies have identified direct flows of information, from media to audience members, without intervening activity of opinion leaders. See, for example, Verling C. Troldahl, "A Field Test of a Modified Two-Step Flow of Communication Model," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 30:609-623, (1966-67).

33. The actual level of knowledge, as measured, changed in different ways in the two community areas. The percent having any knowledge of the topic in the suburban area was 42% in the first wave, 36% in the second, 66% in the third and 70% in the fourth wave of in-

terviews. In the rural area, it was 65, 59, 52 and 73% in the succeeding waves.

34. G.A. Donohue, C.N. Olien and P.J. Tichenor, "Communities, pollution and fight for survival," *loc. cit.*

35. Gordon L. Bultena, David L. Rogers and Karen A. Conner, "Toward Explaining Citizens' Knowledge About a Proposed Reservoir," *Journal of Environmental Education*, 9:24-36 (Winter, 1978).

36. Georg Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations* (New York: Macmillan, 1955); and Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 1956).

37. Jerome Milch in Dorothy Nelkin, ed., *Controversy: Politics of Technical Decisions*. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979).

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